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## GREEK VOTIVE OFFERINGS

PROBABLY most of us, in examining a classical collection in a museum, do not realize how large a proportion of the objects of which it is made up were intended as votive offerings. In the thought of the Greeks, anything which was admired or enjoyed by human beings would be acceptable to the gods and might be dedicated to them. The farmer brought his grain or fruit, the housewife her cakes and



FIG. 1. HERAKLES

the garments she wove, the huntsman a skin, the lad his long hair when he entered upon man's estate, the girl her dolls and toys to Artemis before her marriage. The artist, too, often dedicated his finest work in a temple, and artistic objects in early times were generally made for persons who wished to place them in a shrine as gifts to a divinity.

The temple treasures in many respects took the place of our museums, and were visited by travelers, as Pausanias, for example, who wished to see the beautiful objects, curiosities, and antiquities stored within, as well as to admire the building itself. The inscriptions preserved from the shrine of Apollo at Delos, the Akropolis

of Athens, and other sites give us an idea of their endless variety and interest. These records, which were made by the treasurers going out of office for the information of those newly elected, may be compared to the catalogue of a museum in the care with which they were kept, each article being carefully described, its position in the temple indicated, the weight of gold, silver, and bronze objects given, and the condition of furniture specified.

The earlier statues and statuettes were almost invariably votive offerings, being representations either of a divinity or of worshipers. Of the first type we have in the Museum collection a terracotta statuette of a goddess (Fourth Room, Case E), and many terracottas as well as stone sculpture from Cyprus representing the Mother Goddess with her child, the Lady of Cyprus, and Herakles. In a case of votive offerings assembled from our collections and temporarily placed in the Fifth Room of the Classical Wing, will be seen, on the top shelf, a goddess enthroned between two women, and a stone statuette of the Mother with her child in her arms, while on the shelf below is a small bronze statuette of Apollo holding a bow, a goddess seated, and a terracotta from Cyprus representing Herakles clad in his lion-skin (fig. 1).

Statues of votaries were naturally much commoner than those of divinities. They were dedicated as a sign of perpetual service while the giver was away about his daily business, or as an act of worship. Among the examples which the Museum collection affords are the charming statuette of a woman holding a rabbit in one hand and a pomegranate in the other, in the Sculpture Gallery (No. 3), and in the case of votive offerings on the same shelf with the Apollo, the little bronze poet in gala dress as if for a festival, with his lyre in his hand, inscribed "Dolichos dedicated me," the bronze statuette of a sturdy youth, perhaps a farmer or swineherd, carrying his offering of a pig on his shoulders, and, at the extreme right, the Arcadian peasant in pointed hat and heavy cloak inscribed "Phauleas dedicated it to Pan." The Etruscan maiden, too (Third Room, Case

D, No. 56), like her prototypes of the Akropolis, was probably a votive offering, and the fine bronze statuette representing an athlete preparing to throw the diskos, in the Fourth Room (Case B, No. 78), a thank-offering for victory. The two bronze youths (Fourth Room, Case D, No. 79, and Fifth Room, Case D, No. 89) in the act of saluting a divinity, leave us in no doubt as to the purpose for which they were made.

The Cypriote collection, likewise, possesses great interest from this point of view. It contains large numbers of statues and statuettes of priests and votaries carrying gifts—such as a bowl for drink-offerings, flowers, fruit, small animals and birds—or holding a child. A terracotta representing a man in a long robe holding an animal, probably a kid, in his arms, is shown in the case of votive offerings on the third shelf from the top, at the left. Warriors offered terracotta or stone figures of themselves in full panoply, or on horseback (fig. 2), or a model of a horse in charge of a groom, both horses and riders standing so well in the tumult of battle that the modeler has sometimes made one body do duty for both. Chariots and horses alone or with the warrior and driver were common offerings, as were also small clay shields. Terracotta ships were perhaps dedicated in gratitude for a safe homecoming; with them we can compare the votive ships seen in the churches of southern Europe. Examples of such offerings will be found on the fourth shelf from the top.

The more peaceful side of life in ancient times is reflected in the banqueting-scenes from Cyprus in which the worshipers recline on couches, the divinity being their invisible guest (Cypriote Sculpture, Case 30, No. 1020), or in the ring-dances, of which examples are shown in the case of votive offerings on the third shelf from the top. Here votaries dance around a flute-player, as at some rustic sanctuary, or about a sacred tree in groves such as were an abomination to the Hebrew prophets. Sometimes, instead of dedicating a group or a single figure, small clay masks, *oscilla*, were hung by strings to the tree as a repre-

sentation of the worshiper. An example will be found above the third shelf to the left. Statuettes of votaries often wear ritual dress with masks of bulls, stags, or bears; others play the flute or lyre, whose music was a regular accompaniment of worship in Cyprus. A man in a bear-mask stands on the top shelf of the case at the right, with a flute-player beside him; a figure wearing a bull-mask is on the third shelf from the top.



FIG. 2. VOTIVE WARRIOR

The slaughter of birds and animals was, of course, a very important feature in the service of the gods in ancient times, but the cost of even a small animal was too great for many persons. A statuette of stone or clay might be substituted for a real animal, and such are the cows with a calf in the collection of Cypriote sculpture (Case 40, No. 1147), or the sheep drinking from a trough (Case 40, No. 1148). The two hounds catching hares, of which one is shown at the bottom of the case of offerings, at the left, were probably a hunter's gift. Models of dangerous animals or vermin also were sometimes placed in sanctuaries as thank-offerings

to a god who had driven them away. Such a dedication is the head of a fox or bat made to be hung in a temple (fourth shelf from the top, at the left). When a live animal had been sacrificed, a representation of it in durable material might be placed in the shrine as a memorial of the act of worship. Probably the bronze bull from Dodona on the second shelf from the top, and the marble relief of a dead goat in the Sculpture Gallery (No. 49), were made for this purpose. The bronze statuette of a youth carrying a pig, mentioned above, is a memorial of a different kind, in which the worshiper is represented carrying to the temple the animal to be sacrificed. Among the Cypriote statuettes are two men, each carrying a ram, similar in pose to the well-known Moschophoros from the Akropolis at Athens. One of these is shown on the top shelf of the case at the left.

Attributes of a divinity or symbols associated with his power were often dedicated in a shrine. The pine-cones found in Cyprus, and common on late Greek sites, are symbolic both of Apollo and Dionysos, and the sphinx is frequently found in excavations at shrines of Apollo. The best known of these is the great sphinx on a column dedicated by the people of Naxos at Delphi, a beautiful example of archaic sculpture. A pine-cone and a statuette of a sphinx from Cyprus may be seen on the bottom of the case.

Another class of offerings which, though possessing no artistic value, are always interesting as curiosities, are those given in gratitude for cures of disease. The practice of dedicating representations of the diseased part, or even of the disease, is very ancient and widespread, and continues down to the present day in many communities. The Hebrews placed models of boils

and blains in the ark of Jehovah, and the Greeks dedicated similar objects, and much more frequently, small models of the injured part. Wealthy people had them made of gold and silver, while the poor were content with stone, terracotta, and wood. The records of the temple of Asklepios and of the shrine of the Hero Physician at Athens contain lists of these models which include every part of the body. Gold and silver models were melted down periodically and made into a vessel for use in the sanctuary, while the cheaper ones were thrown out and buried. The Museum possesses several examples from Cyprus, including thumbs, feet, ears, eyes, and mouth, and an interesting group offered in gratitude for the birth of a child, showing the mother reclining, supported by a maid, while the nurse holds the baby. These will be found on the bottom of the case.

Thus from our collection alone, which consists, of course, of durable objects such as would not attract the cupidity of pillagers in later times, or which fortunately escaped their notice, we can see how wide a choice of gifts was open to the Greek who wished to propitiate or thank his gods, whether the great divinities of the city, or the homely deities of the farm and hearth. No wooden image in the farmer's field, no rough statuette of the Mother, need lack its small offering, even if it were only the little terracotta tray of cakes, the gift, we may imagine, of some poor woman (fourth shelf from the bottom). Again these simple objects make plain that of religion, as well as in other departments in life, the Greeks kept their imagination, sense of humor, and sanity, in short, that combination of qualities which we call "good taste."

H. McC.